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"Star-like object certainly brighter than *Venus* three degrees east, one degree south of Sun seen several minutes before and at sunset by naked eye. Five observers. Set behind low clouds. Unquestionably celestial object. Chances favor nucleus bright comet, less probably nova."

Careful search for the object at sunrise Monday morning, sunset Monday evening and at sunrise Tuesday morning was unsuccessful. If the object is a comet, its position could not be predicted because the orbit is totally unknown. It might be too near the Sun, either between Sun and Earth or on the far side of the Sun. If the object was a new star, it should have been observable Monday evening unless the brightness was greatly reduced. In the latter case there will be little chance of observing the object in the bright sky surrounding the Sun, for several weeks to come. The position of the object, R. A. $9^{\text{h}}22^{\text{m}}$, Dec. $+15\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$, about 40° from the galactic plane, militates against the nova hypothesis.

Mount Hamilton, California,

W. W. CAMPBELL.

August 9, 1921

LETTERS RELATING TO THE PRECEDING NOTE

(The following letter is reprinted from *The English Mechanic*, issue for August 19, 1921, page 49, copy having been supplied thru Miss Calvert and Professor Barnard.)

NEW STAR, OR COMET, OR WHAT?

A few days ago the statement appeared in our newspapers that an observer at the Lick Observatory had seen, on the evening of August 7th, a bright star near the Sun, and that it was visible without optical aid. My experiences on that evening may be worth recording. About 8:30 on that Sunday evening I noticed a bit of very clean sky over the place of the recently set Sun, and thinking I might pick up Jupiter and Saturn, I took my binoculars (power about 3) and commenced to search. I soon alighted upon a bright object, which I at the moment thought was Jupiter, but the next moment I saw was not a planet at all; neither did I think it was a star. It was elongated in the direction of the Sun, and was of a distinct reddish tinge. I judged it to be about 6° from the Sun and a very little south of him. It was unfortunate that I was not able to get the telescope on the object, as it was too low. I only held it for about three minutes, as clouds came and hid it.

If the object which I saw was the same as that seen by the American observer, and if our estimates of its position were fairly accurate, then the object must have passed inwards towards the Sun

some 3° in five or six hours. It must also have greatly increased in brightness in that time, as the object which I saw could not be compared to Venus. (Signed) S. FELLOWS.

Wolverhampton, (England), August 14.

(The following letter has been received thru Professor S. I. Bailey, Director of Harvard College Observatory.)

Dear Sir:

Reading an article by Dr. Russell in *Scientific American* for September 6, 1921, about the new object observed at Lick Observatory, I wish to give you my observation of August 6*, 1921, 5:50 P. M. Eastern standard time. Having been deeply interested in astronomy for the last twenty-five years I casually glanced at western sky at that time and saw a very bright (silvery-white) object. Not being familiar with the position of *Venus* on that date I thought it was *Venus*, and yet it shone altogether too bright for *Venus*; after further observing I came to the conclusion it must be *Venus*. * * * * The Sun at this time was obscured by buildings and the object was five to seven degrees east of Sun, and would say as many degrees south of ecliptic, the Moon being in sky at the time. At this hour in broad daylight this was a striking object. Did not scintillate. This must have been the same object seen at Lick Observatory three or four hours later, although they report it much nearer to Sun. This may be due to an enormous speed. A relative, Miss Crow, of Jackson, Michigan, asked me the name of the very bright star setting in the west about 7:30 P. M. the same date; this fixes the observation and date clearly in my mind.

(Signed) H. C. EMMERT, M. D.

Detroit, Michigan.

A cablegram purported to be dispatched from Heidelberg, Germany, and printed in the American newspapers about the 10th of August, stated that at Königstuhl the Earth had been observed to pass thru the tail of a comet on the night of August 8th. Inasmuch as a message to this effect has apparently not been sent out by Dr. Max Wolf, Director of the Königstuhl Observatory, it seems that the report is entitled to small weight. The sender may have been the Wolff News Agency rather than Professor Wolf.

A postcard received from Dr. Max Wolf at Mount Hamilton on September 22, 1921, reads as follows: "Your bright object at

*This date has been confirmed by Dr. Emmert in a later letter.

sunset August 7th has been observed too at Plauen (lat. = $+50^{\circ}30'$, long. = $12^{\circ}7'E.$ of Gr.), Germany: August 7th, $7^h35^m.0$ Gr. M. T., in R. A. $11^h6^m.7$ and Decl. $+7^{\circ}9'$." At the time and place stated the Sun would still be above the horizon and the object referred to must have been very bright to be visible.

In the *English Mechanic* for September 2, 1921, the astronomical editor, Colonel E. E. Markwick, writes:

"I am sure all readers will congratulate Mr. S. Fellows on his wonderfully interesting and lucky observation of the mysterious object seen near the Sun on August 7th. Taking his observation in conjunction with that made at the Lick Observatory, there is, to my mind, no reasonable doubt that it was a brilliant comet that was seen."

Professor E. E. Barnard writes me as follows:

"The case of this comet is not exceptional, as was shown by the Tewfik comet at the total eclipse of May 17, 1882, which was seen and photographed in Egypt, near the Sun (during total eclipse). I, among others, hunted faithfully for that comet morning and night for a long time. Of course if the present comet was a sun-grazer it would move in a very narrow orbit, the whole of which might lie in daylight. It may be discovered yet in the southern hemisphere."

W. W. C.

The astronomical column in *Nature*, September 8, 1921, reports an additional observation made by Lieutenant Day and others at Ferndown, Dorset, England, on Sunday, August 7th, about 7 P. M. Greenwich Mean Time. The object was estimated to have magnitude *minus* 2 and to be 4 degrees distant from the Sun.

The editor of *Nature* comments that a comet of retrograde motion, moving nearly in the plane of the ecliptic, having small perihelion distance, and approaching the Sun from behind, might remain in close proximity to the Sun during the whole time that it was bright.

A further note in *Nature* makes it probable that the "comet's tail" reported from Königstuhl as observed on the night of August 8th was an auroral streamer.

No other observations worth quoting have come to my notice. There appears to be no reason to doubt that the object was truly celestial.

W. W. C.